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ABSTRACT

The research reported assesses the impact of a program on the change of ethnic attitudes of students. The Anthropology Curriculum Project's "Race, Caste and Prejudice," designed to enhance intergroup attitudes and behavior, is a supplementary secondary school unit of study, text and handbook, dealing with race, caste and prejudice from a cross-cultural anthropological standpoint employing student activities emphasizing affective involvement such as simulation and field research. The multimethod assessment of the materials employs statistical analysis and the technique of non-participant observation, or ethnography. The latter is composed of daily non-participant observation of classrooms, informal student and teacher feedback, unstructured interviews with a random sample of experimental group students and a formal teacher evaluation conference. Results from analysis of covariance reveal a significant difference in ethnic attitude changes as measured by a cognitive-affective scale. Through ethnographic analysis, the most influential factors in classroom interactions are found to be student sensitivity to the material and situation and the class ethnic composition. Other findings of teacher and student behavior and reactions are discussed, as are implications for further research. References are included. (Author/KSM)

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ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL ETHNIC RELATIONS UNIT: RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

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This paper was drawn from the writer's dissertation, The Impact of "Race, Caste, and Prejudice" on the Ethnic Attitudes of High School Students: A Multimethod Assessment.

Race, Caste and Prejudice materials and copies of the dissertation may be obtained from Professor Marion J. Rice at the address below:

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Purpose

Attempts to change the ethnic attitudes of students through education have a long history, take many forms, and result in varying degrees of success. Schneider (1971) has categorized recent ethnic relations education programs into two major categories primarily on the basis of their intended purposes: (1) those designed to teach members of a minority and others about the role and contributions of that group and consequently to create positive self-images among minority group members and (2) those more general in nature designed primarily to enhance intergroup attitudes and behavior. The purpose of this research was to assess the impact of a representative of the second type of program, the Anthropology Curriculum Project's Race, Caste, and Prejudice.

Race, Caste, and Prejudice (RCP) is a supplementary secondary school unit of study. RCP consists of a text and student handbook. The text deals with the content of race, caste, and prejudice from a cross-cultural anthropological standpoint. The handbook contains twenty-seven student activities, from simulation to field research in gathering sociological data, which emphasize affective student involvement. The focus of the cognitively oriented text is the expository presentation of extensive social science data, drawn from a range of social science disciplines.

Method

A multimethod assessment technique was employed in this research. In addition to statistical analysis, the technique of non-participant observation or ethnography, as used by the sociologist and anthropologist, was incorporated into the research methodology. Non-participant observation provided additional data on the impact of RCP in the real classroom situations. The following data sources composed the ethnographic component of the research: (1) daily non-participant observation of classrooms; (2) informal student feedback; (3) unstructured interview with a random sample of experimental group students; (4) informal teacher feedback; and (5) formal teacher evaluation conference.

This follow-up study of Kleg's (1970) initial assessment retained his RCP cognitive-affective instrument and added an investigator-constructed semantic differential scale to measure ethnic attitude change. Kleg's cognitive-affective instrument was premised on the acceptance of Rokeach's (1960) notion that an attitude consists of two overlapping dimensions, one of which is cognitive and the other affective. The items used in Kleg's cognitive-affective instrument were constructed so that the first stimulus evoked was attitudinal. The item also involved a knowledge base so that concurrently or successively the subject affirmed or rejected his initial affective response in the light of the cognitive aspect of the item.

The semantic differential technique, developed by Osgood (1957), measures an individual's reaction to semantic objects. Originally developed to measure "meaning," it has been used to study attitude

formation, attitudes toward jobs and occupations, and among other things, attitudes toward minority groups (Summers, 1970).

Attitude ratings on a semantic differential scale are determined on the basis of the subject's response to a concept as rated by position on a scale to sets of bipolar adjective pairs, such as strong-weak, good-bad, and fast-slow. Ratings of each object are correlated and factor-analyzed to determine the dimensions of "meaning" given to a particular object. Many replications of this process established the stability of three dimensions: evaluation, potency, and activity (Osgood, 1957 and Summers, 1970). The concepts rated in this study were as follows: Integrated Housing, Black Students, Integrated Education, Interracial Friendship, Interracial Dating, Angela Davis, Black Panthers, Martin Luther King, Ralph Abernathy, N.A.A.C.P., Julian Bond, Mormons, Catholics, and Jews.

Of the two attitude instruments employed in this study, the semantic differential scale taps the more purely affective or connotative response, while the cognitive-affective, as designed, probably elicits affective response mediated by cognitive inputs and anchored in RCP content.

Analysis of covariance, with pretest scores on the cognitive-affective and semantic differential scales as the covariates, was used to assess the treatment effects and the interaction effects of treatment and sex and treatment and socio-economic status.

The research design was Stanley and Campbell's Design 10, the non-equivalent control group design. The study included a pre- and posttest with the form and substance remaining constant for both administrations. All testing was administered and controlled by the

investigator.

The sample consisted of 157 white and 10 black students in the experimental group and 103 white and 7 black students in the control group. Both experimental and control groups were recruited from schools which had previously worked with the University of Georgia. All classes were obtained through personal contact by the researcher. Six experimental and six control classes from two high schools in Northeast Georgia (School A and School B) constituted the sample.

Since the attitude assessment instruments were basically designed to measure white attitudes toward blacks, the test scores of 17 blacks in the sample were not included in the statistical analysis. However, discussion of black student response to RCP was an integral part of the discussion of the non-participant observation findings.

Results

Analysis of covariance indicated a significant difference in ethnic attitude changes as measured by the cognitive-affective scale at the .05 level. At the end of the treatment period, the experimental group held more favorable ethnic attitudes than the control. The interaction effects of treatment and socio-economic status and treatment and sex were not significant as measured by the cognitive-affective scale.

Independent analyses of semantic differential results were performed for the treatment and interaction effects by sex and the treatment and interaction effects by socio-economic status. Each of these independent analyses was performed on the two separate factor scorings of evaluation and dynamism over the 14 semantic differential

concepts resulting in a total of 56 analyses. A pilot study of the present instrument had revealed that the potency and activity adjective pairs had coalesced into one factor which Osgood (1957) labels as dynamism.

The findings of the treatment and interaction effects, based upon semantic differential scoring, are complex, cloudy, and difficult to place into a meaningful and comprehensive interpretative framework. Analysis of covariance indicated a significant difference in attitude changes between experimental and control group students in only 7 of 56 analyses.

The interaction effect of treatment and socio-economic status was found to be significant in only one case. The interaction effect of treatment and sex was significant in only three cases. Further analysis revealed that the experimental females had more tolerant attitudes on the concepts of Interracial Dating and Jews, especially in comparison with control females. This was found to be consistent with the non-participant observation findings which indicated females were more open and tolerant in classroom discussions of RCP than were males.

The ethnographic analysis contributed several interesting points to the assessment of the impact of RCP. Two of the most influential factors in classroom interactions were student sensitivity to the material and situation and class ethnic composition. These factors were interrelated. It is clear to this investigator that blacks were more sensitive to the material, were more emotionally involved in the material, and wanted most to use it as a vehicle for starting to change their school situation. Black sensitivity to the material was revealed in their expressed concern

over the presentation of negative ethnic information no matter how it is presented or for what purpose. However, graphed and charted comparative data showing blacks with less education, less income, and poorer housing did not disturb blacks nearly as much as the written quotation berating blacks as lazy and stupid which they took out of context and erroneously attributed to the author of the text.

This sensitivity is further revealed in their emotional answers during class discussions. They were more expressive, more vocal, and more invoved than whites during the study of RCP, especially in comparison with their behavior on the previous unit. In fact, during one discussion, which was completely dominated by blacks, they exhorted the white students to speak up and chided the whites for keeping their feelings to themselves. On a personal opinion questionnaire, administered after treatment asking for the school or national event since September which had the most personal significance for them, six out of eight black respondents identified an ethnic-involving event - but not one white did. In addition, black students during interviews stated that they felt the school racial situation was bad, while whites generally did not think it was.

Linked to the sensitivity concept is the situational factor of ethnic composition of the class. In the situations observed in the two schools represented in this study, no experimental class had a half-white and half-black racial balance which Koslin (1970) feels is most crucial for successful interracial relations, at least for elementary students. Although there is no empirical evidence, it is inferred that blacks would be less sensitive to RCP in situations where they dominate or are at least in equal representation.

The trial situations suggest that when the class is all white, students speak quite openly about their racial feelings. However, the presence of one black will alter free expression of white students. For example, in School B when the one black girl transferred into the previously all white class, several whites complained to the teacher that now they could not speak honestly in class. Although this position by the students was mitigated over time, the same reaction was encountered in School A. Both experimental teachers felt that his class which had one black student was not as open as his class with no blacks. When students who had one black in their class were interviewed, they stated that they did not always say what they felt because they did not want to hurt the black student's feelings.

It seems that blacks, on the other hand, are more willing to open up when they have some colleagues. As mentioned previously, the blacks in the first period School B class were quite verbally and emotionally involved. They challenged the whites to participate. In this situation, several white girls confidentially expressed to the investigator fear of reprisal from black females if they said anything offensive. Also, all five whites interviewed in that class said they felt inhibited by the blacks. It seems that where there was just one black student many students held back statements out of respect for the black student's feelings, but that in the School B situation, at least the girls were restrained out of a fear of some kind of reprisal from the blacks outside of class.

The ethnographic probe yielded many other findings of importance that amplify and expand on the statistical findings as well as providing insight into the situationally specific dynamics involved in the process

of implementing RCP in two secondary schools.

First, the ethnographic data sources indicated that teachers and students had a favorable over-all impression of the materials, and teachers desired to use them again. Second, teachers did not systematically incorporate the student handbook with the text and they did not prepare students well for use of the affect-involving activities of the handbook, such as role-playing. Third, the three teachers using RCP differed widely on class presentation and emphasis on the material. Fourth, both teachers and students felt that the material was difficult and some students experienced cognitive conflict with the concepts of racial equality and human evolution suggested by the text. Finally, few students felt that the ethnic attitudes of the class as a whole changed as a result of studying RCP and even fewer thought that a school-wide change had occurred as a result of the study. However, several students stated that they personally had experienced an attitude change and teachers felt that students could now handle controversial issues better and were more amenable to future attitude change.

Implications for Further Research

The implications of this study for further research derive from three sources: (1) statistical analysis of data: (2) ethnographic findings: and (3) weaknesses in current study. The role of the related literature is interwoven with these factors in the development of suggestions for further research.

The statistical analysis seems to point up the need for further clarification of the relationship of sex and socio-economic status to treatment effects. It also indicates the need for further analysis

of the likelihood that certain attitudinal concepts are more resistant to change than are others. A possible direction for this research would be to test the notions of Rokeach (1968) on belief centrality and Sherif and Sherif (1967) on ego-involvement in attitudes. As Triandis (1971) points out, both of these concepts are similar. Both concepts hold that some beliefs and attitudes, those that Rokeach calls central or primitive and those that Sherif and Sherif label as ego-involving, are more close to a person than others. As a consequence, these more deeply held beliefs and attitudes may be the most difficult to change.

The ethnographic findings suggest further research in several areas. First, the situational factor, particularly the impact of ethnic composition on attitudes and actions in the classroom, needs more adequate study employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies The whole spectrum of black attitudes toward whites in general and toward intergroup education programs is vastly unexplored.

More specifically to RCP, additional research on teacher utilization of material is needed, especially in the area of the affective dimension of the student handbook. Elms (1969) reports a fairly substantial body of research on the effect of simulation in changing a variety of attitudes. Properly handled and executed, the simulation activities in RCP may have strong impact on student ethnic attitudes. Certainly more specific research on role-playing in the classroom situation could broaden understanding of its potential and limitations for modifying ethnic attitudes in the secondary classroom.

More intensive and precise observation of classroom interactions could develop new relationships and concepts which were not perceived or developed in this study. One approach in this direction would be to keep an accurate recording of specific teaching acts and their impact. These teaching acts could be analyzed within a preestablished framework delineating some of the broader and more common attitude change strategies, such as behavior reinforcement and cognitive dissonance. In this way ethnographic data could be evaluated within, and fitted into, existing theoretical positions as well as generating new theoretical positions on attitude change strategies. These positions could later be explored utilising the statistical model.

Several weak points in this study could provide foci for further research in this area. One of the major weaknesses of this study was its failure to explore the relationship of cognitive pupil variables, such as IQ, reading ability, and social studies achievement, to attitude change. Fisher (1965), for example, reports that the attitude changes of fifth-graders toward American Indians after a special program were unaffected by either IQ or reading achievement. Similarly, Singer (1967) reports that IQ alone was not a central determinant of ethnic attitude of white elementary students toward blacks. Although Kleg's study contributed toward understanding the relationship between cognitive information and attitude change, the complex relationship between cognitive variables and attitude change is still dimly understood by researchers.

Similarly, the relationship of personality factors, such as self-esteem, emotional adjustment, and mental rigidity, to attitude

change needs more study. The work of Adorno (1950) and Rokeach (1960: 1968) on authoritarianism, dogmatism, and cognitive rigidity provides an excellent theoretical base for further empirical investigation.

Another major weakness of this study was the lack of pupil randomization and the further lack of random assignment of intact classes to either experimental or control groups. Perhaps, when more institutional concern is expressed for research knowledge in the area of intergroup relations and public schools become more open to researchers, larger and more randomly selected samples can be obtained which will allow for greater generalizability of research results.

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